

was his first choice when Mr. Chrétien asked him what he would like to do for the government after the Liberal victory in 1993.

But the position was filled at the time by Alexander Stuart of the Electrolyser Corporation Ltd., so Mr. Lavelle instead took on the federal bank until the EDC position came open.

Currently in the last year of his first three-year term at EDC, Mr. Lavelle is expected to be re-appointed to a second term by Mr. Chrétien later this year.

He's an interesting appointment for two reasons: His deep connections in the Liberal party, and the anti-free-trade comments he made in the early 1990s. He acknowledges the liaison role he plays between the EDC and the Liberal government, running board meetings and conferring with ministers before every board meeting.

But Mr. Lavelle claims that he is no longer active as a Liberal and does not advise Mr. Chrétien "on a political basis."

"No, no. When I take on the chairmanship of a Crown corporation, you know, the idea of being politically involved is something I stay away from," says Mr. Lavelle. "I would have to say that my sympathies are with the Liberals, but I am not a practising — I don't go to conventions. I don't go to party functions or anything like that."

However, when he was reminded that he has donated \$1,340 to the Liberal party in the past seven years, including a total of \$1,131.45 in 1997 and 1998, Mr. Lavelle allowed that he might have attended a few Liberal events, such as a fundraising dinner, in the past few years.

While Mr. Lavelle acknowledges that many will dismiss him as "a political hack," he argues that he has the qualifications for the job if you consider his career.

"Obviously people are skeptical because they either think you are a friend of the prime minister or that you're a Liberal. So I think you have to make every effort to do it better than people are going to anticipate that you will," says Mr. Lavelle, who has a colour photo of Mr. Chrétien propped up by the window behind his desk.

He says he is more than qualified for the job. A former deputy minister of industry in the Ontario government when it was ruled by Liberal premier David Peterson and former vice-president of Magna International Inc., Mr. Lavelle also worked as a high-profile lobbyist before the Chrétien government came to power in 1993, as the president of the Automotive Parts Manufacturers Association of Canada and, subsequently, as the chairman of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business.

It is Mr. Lavelle's long, loyal friendship with Mr. Chrétien that got him where he is, as the chairman readily

Pat Lavelle's relationship with Jean Chrétien goes back almost 40 years, and it is that loyal friendship with the prime minister that got him where is, Mr. Lavelle acknowledges. But he says his experience in the corporate world makes him more than qualified to be chairman of the Export Development Corporation.

admits in interviews.

"I don't think patronage is a dirty word or, if I did, I'd be indicting myself ... I've always been a Liberal," Mr. Lavelle told the *Financial Post* last year.

Mr. Lavelle and Mr. Chrétien have been friends almost 40 years, and the prime minister includes him in a tight circle of influential political advisers whom he can count on his fingers.

The long-lasting friendship began when Mr. Lavelle helped Mr. Chrétien, at the time a rookie MP with some unemployment insurance problems in his riding. Mr. Lavelle was considered one of the grand charmers of the inter-governmental circuit who was known for making the first phone call of congratulations.

There is the well-known story of when Mr. Chrétien was appointed Canada's first French-Canadian minister of finance in 1977. Ontario treasurer Darcy McKeough was quickly on the phone to congratulate him.

"I just wanted to call before Pat Lavelle did," Mr. McKeough said jokingly.

"You're too late," came the reply from Mr. Chrétien.

Afterwards, Mr. Lavelle stayed in touch with Mr. Chrétien by offering lots of free advice. During his stint as the Ontario government's representative in Paris, Mr. Lavelle hosted Mr. Chrétien on several trips to France.

During the 1984 and 1990 Liberal leadership races, Mr. Lavelle was Mr. Chrétien's Ontario campaign manager. During the delegate-selection process prior to the 1990 convention, Mr. Lavelle made the news for transferring his party membership from his Rosedale riding to Sarnia-Lambton in order to get a vote for the convention in Calgary.

Mr. Lavelle, who was born in Toronto, transferred his membership after failing to be selected as a delegate in his own riding.

In *Citizen* columnist Lawrence Martin's book on Mr. Chrétien, Mr. Lavelle describes the withering look the bitter candidate gave him at the emotional 1984 convention after Mr. Lavelle's old boss, Allan MacEachen, took his support to John Turner rather than Mr. Chrétien.

Mr. Lavelle said it was a blistering stare that would haunt him for years.

What did he see in Mr. Chrétien in the 1960s that made him a believer?

"I saw what was ultimately developed about Jean Chrétien. He was a very strong, tough-minded, political individual who was quite determined, had a vision of the country, had the determination to put that into effect," says Mr. Lavelle.

"Mr. Chrétien had the internal stuff to be a very good politician and a

leader."

There are not many people who could be appointed the head of an export corporation after making strong protectionist statements less than 10 years ago, calling free trade with the Americans "disastrous."

Explaining himself today, Mr. Lavelle says: "I never wanted to consider myself as a protectionist. I'm interested in

international trade."

At a 1990 conference in Toronto, Mr. Lavelle and union leader Buzz Hargrove spoke out against free-trade talks with Mexico. Mr. Lavelle said: "It appears we have learned very little as a result of the disastrous outcome of the free-trade negotiations with the United States."

During the 1990 leadership race as

offer from Mr. Chrétien to oust the contentious nomination for the Etobicoke spot.

Mr. Lavelle's appointment as chairman of the EDC has been low-key and free of controversy.

"I've never regretted (not in 1993). No. I was interested in politics, I think politics is a very, very tough game, so I have no regrets."

With a passkey to the corridors of power and his pockets bulging with patronage plums, Mr. Lavelle is looking back.

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